

Upper Darby, PA - In recognition of the Vietnamese New Year, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) met with members of the Vietnamese community of Upper Darby at St. Alice Church on Sunday. After the New Year Mass, members of the church presented a thank you to those who assisted in the murder investigation of Hoa Pham, 60, a local resident and member of St. Alice Church, who was found dead on his porch on November 10, 2008. "I was awed by the compassion and closeness that St. Alice Church has fostered within the community," said Congressman Sestak. "It was an honor to celebrate the Vietnamese New Year here, and I am thankful for the opportunity to speak with my constituents during this difficult time." Congressman Sestak had attended a vigil on November 16th for Mr. Pham and attended Mass at the Church on November 23rd with the Vietnamese Community.

Pham, who came to the United States approximately 17 years ago, was a decorated U.S. Army veteran of the Vietnam War who was held captive in North Vietnam for seven years. Since his move to Upper Darby, Pham worked for Alloy Surface of West Chester and was extremely active in the Roman Catholic Vietnamese community at St. Alice Church. Congressman Sestak remarked, "Mr. Pham, a dedicated church member and veteran, as well as a proud husband and father, was a role model and an asset to our community. St. Alice Church took this opportunity to commemorate the sacrifices he made for our safety and freedoms. In times of tragedy, it is essential to come together as a community, and I am pleased with St. Alice's efforts to do so."

The Vietnamese New Year, often referred to as "Tet," is celebrated on the same day as the Chinese New Year, though exceptions arise due to the one-hour time difference between Hanoi and Beijing. It takes place the first day of the first month of the Chinese calendar, which falls in late January or early February. Tet is also an occasion for family reunions. During Tet, many Vietnamese visit their relatives and temples, forgetting about the troubles of the past year. Some return to worship at the family altar or visit the graves of their ancestors in their homeland. Although Tet is a national holiday for all Vietnamese, each region and religion has its own customs.

"As a Congressman, I am blessed to represent an ethnically diverse District, which includes many Asian constituents, such as the Vietnamese-American parishioners in attendance today," said Congressman Sestak. "Last November, one of my constituents and your fellow parishioner, Mr. Hoa Pham, was viciously tortured and tragically murdered during a burglary. His wife, Mrs. Thi Nguyen was brutally assaulted and left in critical condition. The assailant was arrested and has since been arraigned in recent weeks, and I applaud Superintendent Chitwood and Detective Capt. George Rhoades Jr. for their handling of the Pham case."

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.

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